

## APPENDIX H

### Personal Interviews with Elected Officials/Supporters of TN Libraries

Personal interviews were conducted by telephone with eight individuals, whose names are listed at the end of this brief report. The conversations explored the importance of public libraries in Tennessee, the reason for regional library centers, what local libraries need from regional library centers, and, given the current financial situation, options for the future of regional library centers.

Key ideas from the interviews:

- Public libraries are important because they attract and serve all segments of the population; they keep people educated and informed. They widen horizons, especially for those still without Internet access. They help to recruit new businesses and industries to communities. “We have to have an educated workforce if we’re to compete in the world economy.” Reading is still important although libraries also give people access to computers and the opportunity to do research. Public libraries are especially important in rural areas where school libraries don’t have what students need access to for their studies and research. Access to information is one of the things that separate the haves and have nots; libraries are great equalizers. Libraries support the quality of life.
- Regional library centers support local libraries. They give technology support and professional guidance to libraries and boards without professionally trained staff. “Regionals connect libraries for resources...it’s the efficiency of working together.” “Regionals serve different needs because there are many levels of sophistication within the state. For some the most important thing is training.”
- “I would like to see a group of services offer by the regionals with a price tag given so each library could choose what they need. My library doesn’t need books, but it does use continuing education and recertification.” Regionals will be called upon for technology help and helping people with changing their job skills. Regionals are important to rural areas in sharing resources. Regionals will have to help with more technology guidance and training in the future; they can coordinate things.
- Given the current financial situation, regionals should not be eliminated. “If we can keep the structure, we can get back into it when the dollars flow again.” “Doing away with the regionals would harm libraries.” “Combining might be best; starting over is not a good idea.” “I’d support some consolidation, but we couldn’t do away with regionals.” “Regional library here fosters resource sharing. We don’t have a central library big enough to do it alone.”

**Persons interviewed:**

Danny Bryant, City of Fayetteville Alderman

Charles Curtis, State Representative

Virginia Gray, former Dickson County Commissioner, former Warioto Regional Library Board member and Dickson County library board

Steve McDaniel, State Representative

Mark Maddox, former State Representative

Rob Montgomery, Criminal Court Judge, 2<sup>nd</sup> District, Sullivan County

Tom Taylor, Maryville Mayor

Jim Tracy, State Senator

Note: In addition to these interviews, the consultants interviewed each of the regional directors (10 - there were two vacancies at the time of the interviews) plus the recently retired director of the Nolichucky Regional Library and a former regional library director who requested an interview.